

HIGHER ORDER THINKING SCHOOLS™
strong arts arts integration democratic practice



John Lyman Elementary's Buddy Bench is adorned with student fingerprints (p. 10).

Rooted in Positive Learning

—Bonnie Koba, Director

It's heartwarming to me to see the transition in this newsletter from predominantly adult writers to a mix of adult and student writers. How wonderful to hear the brave voices of our primary, middle, and high school students sharing stories of how the core components of HOT Schools - the arts and democratic practice - have impacted them and their classmates personally. Our mission states that Higher Order Thinking Schools inspire life-long learning in, about and through the arts in a democratic community celebrating each child's unique voice. A growing body of research evinces that students are more likely to come to school, to be engaged in their learning, and to succeed in a positive school climate and culture. The democratic practice component of HOT Schools, inspired by philosopher and educational reformist, John Dewey, is directly synced to this aspect of schooling and learning. While schools across the nation struggle to develop practices that pro-

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plore and address issues of social importance to them and to their peers, and that teach students the importance of voice, choice, contribution, participation and responsibility in a respectful environment. From “A Mystical Christmas with My Little Brother” to “Guys with Ties” to “I Recreated Myself” to “Our Buddy Bench” - these are the stories of young people solidly rooted in a positive learning environment, becoming engaged democratic citizens. My hat is off to the teachers who structure these learning opportunities for their students and to the parents who trust and support the process.

Bonnie

The Power of the Writer’s Wall of Fame

—Jennifer Walsh, Literacy Coach,
Edgewood Magnet

I was walking down the hall when I noticed a parent standing in front of the Writers’ Wall of Fame reading her fifth grade daughter’s piece of writing about her brother, who was not even a month old yet. She had just stepped out of the gymnasium, where her daughter was a participating in a Tae Kwon Do demonstration. I heard her say, “I wish I could get a copy of this, I would love to frame it and hang it in her brother’s room.” At that moment, I stopped in my tracks and realized that this was the perfect opportunity to strengthen our never-ending quest to foster positive relationships between school and home. This is the “power” of the Writers’ Wall of Fame and how it comes to life. The daughter

happened to pass by at this time and said, “Mom, can you believe that my writing made it on the Writers’ Wall of Fame.” Mom replied, “I know, I’m so proud of you.” Her daughter was smiling from ear to ear as she skipped down the hallway. I told the mom, that I would be happy to take the piece of writing down to make a copy for her. As we were making our way to the copy machine, she kept on talking about all of the different places in the house that she would like to display the writing. Five copies later, she left Edgewood Magnet School with not only her hands full, but also her heart.

A Mystical Christmas With My Little Brother

It was mid-December. Outside, there was a blanket of snow that covered my front lawn. My little brother, Ryan, was not even one month old; he was staring at the shimmering Christmas tree glowing in the darkness of the mystical December night. Christmas is my favorite holiday, with the familiar Christmas carols booming from the radio as if we were at a concert and sitting in the front row right next to the speakers! I’m blessed to share my experience with my little brother, his twinkling eyes staring into my soul. It’s late, so I gazed at him as he drifted into a wonderland of dreams. I wondered what he was dreaming about. He was wearing his size 3-6 month “I heart mommy” footie pajamas. I thought to myself, out of all the people in the world I get the chance to be an older sister! Then the cookies were served; my mom baked my favorite type of cookie: double fudge chocolate chunk, and they were the size of Frisbees. Within a matter of seconds I was just lying there on the couch with my little brother right there by my side. It was the best feeling in the whole entire universe. I felt like my happiness was flaring out of me like fireworks and lighting up the room!

Student work displayed on the Writer’s Wall of Fame.

I Recreated Myself

—Kiana Arevalo, Student, R. J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts



Little Women (the musical) at R. J. Kinsella, November 2015. Kiana Arevalo starred as Jo March.

People always ask me, "Why do you go to that school?" and I can't blame them for wondering. It's tiny and can be a bit unorganized; there are very few clubs, and no AP courses offered. In fact, because the high school is just being built, my school is housed in a temporary location, which happens to be an old warehouse. It's easy to overlook the beauty of my school, seeing nothing special about it. I admit, even I have daydreamed about what it would be like to attend a "normal" high school and have a "normal" high school experience. However, I've come to see my school as a paradise and a safe haven. I'm not exaggerating when I say the people here have revitalized me, and my experiences have molded me into a person that I'm honored to be.

When I transferred to Kinsella, I quickly realized that the school is made up of a cluster of independent people, each person individually odd and uniquely special. How ironic it is that a group of people who don't quite fit in anywhere, fit so perfectly together. The art we produce is a thousand times greater than the chaos that occasionally fills the hallway. It was at Kinsella that I began to fig-

ure out my identity. Most of this was due to the fact that whatever I decided to try out wasn't sneered at, but instead supported. My teachers taught me things that opened my eyes, kept me interested, and shaped the way I thought and felt. From analyzing gender roles and stereotypes in classic literature, to searching for the truths hidden within the media, my horizons were broadened.

The emphasis on performing arts provided a whole new dimension to my education. My journey in Kinsella's Musical Theatre program built confidence in me and allowed me to embrace my creative side. In addition, participating in theater gave me the opportunity to take on different identities and reminded me of the importance of empathy. Jo March from Little Women was my favorite role to play because Jo is ardent and determined; she has a fierce passion within her. Stepping into that persona made me believe I could be strong as well; but it did more than just that, it also reminded me that everyone has their own story and we cannot judge someone before walking in their shoes.

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Guys with Ties Dress the Part

—with contributions by Worthington Hooker students Jayden Clark and Declan McGinley



Members of the Guys with Ties ECHO stand tall with Co-Principal Sheryl Hershonik and ECHO Advisor Doug Jones.

There is at Worthington Hooker a three-year old Enhanced Curricular HOT Opportunity (ECHO) that has, along with its members, grown and matured. While initially named Boys Group the ECHO has since been befittingly renamed Guys with Ties. It is one of several ECHOs that gather weekly.

Co-Principal Sheryl Hershonik explains, “Guys with Ties embraces an important mission for our middle school boys. The group provides a safe place for the students to talk, share experiences, and discuss what is important to them as young men. Doug Jones, science teacher, brilliantly advises Guys with Ties by facilitating opportunities for the boys to positively identify with a strong adult, cross racial and socioeconomic barriers, and create a brotherhood of support, urging one another to be their best. We are proud of their work and their growth as young adults.”

Mr. Jones asked that members of Guys with Ties dress the part by wearing button-down shirts and ties to school. Many of the members were subsequently taught how to tie their ties by Mr. Jones. Guys with Ties members Jayden Clark and

Declan McGinley share with us their experiences as members of the ECHO.

Thank you for answering a few questions about Guys with Ties. Why did you become part of Guys with Ties and how long have you been part of it?

Declan: Two years as of now. Mr. Jones picked me.

Jayden: All of my friends that are boys wanted to be in it. I just wasn't a fan until I actually got in the club and just felt comfortable and safe there. I have been in Guys with Ties for a year and a half.

How many guys with ties are there?

Declan: Around fifteen, I think.

Does Guys with Ties have a mission or objective?

Declan: To help the community and turn young boys into young men.

Jayden: I feel like we do have a mission or objective. I am just going to say that what I think our objective is, is that once you come in the club you have to be 100% committed and you have to grow up and start becoming a gentlemen as you're in the club.

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I Recreated Myself continued

In just four years I recreated myself into something extraordinary. I embraced my peculiar side and developed the ability to think independently. This transformation was a direct result of my time at Kinsella. At Kinsella I was surrounded by such a diverse group of people, and yet it was our differences that united us. My teachers and peers inspired me and brought out a side of me I never knew was there. I am ready to take on anything that comes my way.

Guys with Ties... continued

If a student was considering joining Guys with Ties but was uncertain then what would you say to them?

Jayden: I would say if you want to become a part of it, you have to be committed and mature to be in this fellowship of 7th & 8th grade boys.

Do you guys wear your ties every school day?

Jayden: No we don't wear ties every school day. We just confirmed the days we wear them are Wednesday's and Friday's.

What changes when you wear your tie?

Declan: You feel more confident and secure when you're with your boys.

Jayden: When I wear the tie I feel like a young man having a job. I kinda feel like my dad.

Describe for me your favorite tie?

Declan: A black bow tie.

Jayden: My favorite tie is a shiny black tie.

Why is it your favorite?

Declan: Because it's classy.

Jayden: It matches with anything.

Why did you become part of Guys With Ties?

Declan: Because I wanted to be part of that family of guys who look out for each other.

Do you feel as if any aspect of you has changed since becoming part of this ECHO?

Declan: I've become more understanding of other people's lives since we have come out and told each other things that we normally wouldn't tell anyone else.

Jayden: I think I have changed a little. My mom says I definitely have changed.

Has the way you think or the way you behave changed? If so, how?

Declan: I have more class and respect for my classmates.

Jayden: Thank You! 😊 Have a blessed day.

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Teach like a Pirate

—Tiffany Coauette, Principal, Pleasant Valley

As a building administrator one of the toughest challenges each year is planning professional development that meets the needs of all staff in the building. Just as we differentiate for the needs of students, we also must try to do the same for the needs of our teachers when designing or scheduling professional development. So when I had to plan for a morning session of PD that would be meaningful to teachers and inspire them to feel refreshed two months into the school year, I really was stumped. After searching for a HOTSchools artist and presenter who could meet the needs of the school and the staff, I was falling short. I contacted the HOTSchools office for suggestions. “Why not bring them to Teach Like a Pirate at Wesleyan?” I was asked. Hmm...load up a bus with teachers and support staff and head to a half day of fun? It sounded like a fabulous idea.

Two weeks before the big day, I handed out the book *Teach Like a Pirate* by Dave Burgess to all classroom teachers and anyone else who wanted to read it prior to the workshop. Within days, teachers were coming up to me with comments. “I think I’m going to love this.” “Is he for real? Who has that much energy?” “He is a high school teacher. Will I be able to apply this to elementary?” I could hear the hesitation in some voices and the complete excitement in others.

The day of the presentation, 27 teachers and staff loaded into a school bus at Pleasant Valley Elementary School and headed to Wesleyan. The tone of the morning was great—light, fun, and energetic as we headed off for a “field trip”. An opportunity to go off site for the day meant we were relaxed and chatty.

As Dave Burgess began his presentation, I tried to look around at my colleagues. If they were enjoying it, I knew I could rest easy and the day

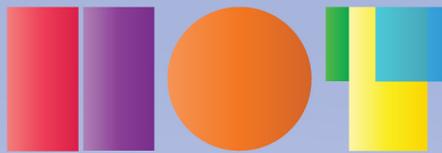


Dave Burgess at a HOTSchools professional development with Jack Jackter Intermediate teachers Jen Totten (Grade 5) and Annie Scibek (Grade 4).

would be a success, but if they hated it, it would be more than two hours until I could debrief with them and look for bits of information they could use. Ten minutes after the start, I tried looking around to gauge the reaction of the staff. I could tell by the looks on their faces they were hooked. From their vantage points on the edges of seats, their expressions were full of awe and inspiration. Dave Burgess presented with a kind of energy that one wishes they could capture in a bottle, and that energy captivated an audience of hundreds for two and a half hours!

The essence of Burgess’ presentation comes down to one question: “If your students didn’t have to be sitting there in your class, would they still be there?” Burgess asks teachers to plan several lessons a year that are so wonderful that students would want to buy tickets to attend. He used examples from his own teaching and shared many other examples from around the country. Although I had read his book, I knew I had to begin following him on Twitter and look for the topic on Pinterest for more ideas.

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HIGHER ORDER THINKING SCHOOLS™

23RD Annual Summer Institute

Storytelling ~ an Artful Journey

JULY 11-15, 2016 HARTFORD, CT

FEATURING



FINDING THE STORIES WITHIN by **GERALD RICHARDS**, San Francisco, CA. What is the role of story and storytelling in education? How do we allow students to develop their personal voice and narratives to aid in their future success? Richards will discuss the importance of storytelling and how it is the foundation of the organization that works with more than 30,000 students each year. He is the Chief Executive Officer of 826 National and a respected trainer and sought after speaker on topics of youth and education access.



THE POWER OF STORY IN A CYBER WORLD— YES, REALLY by **CARMEN AGRA DEEDY**, Decatur, GA. This dynamic children's author and storyteller will discuss the critical role story can, and must, play in the lives of today's children who are bombarded daily with all manner of entertainment and instruction, delivered to them via technology. Deedy is best known for her beloved children's books, which include the New York Times Bestseller, *14 Cows for America*.



THINK LIKE AN ARTIST: RETHINKING SCHOOLS AS CENTERS FOR CREATIVITY by **CINDY MEYERS FOLEY**, Columbus, OH. The concept of creativity is challenging. Even those of us who foster creativity and know when it is happening in our classrooms still struggle to articulate the specific skills and make the process visible to stakeholders and students. Foley will help with this research and language as well as unravel key behaviors and dispositions our students need for success. She is the Executive Assistant Director and Director of Learning and Experience at the Columbus Museum of Art.



LOSING YOUR VOICE IN ORDER TO FIND IT... by **GAYLE DANLEY**, Silver Spring, MD. This former International Poetry Slam Champ and Grief Friend founder will share how she uses poetry to heal herself and others. Danley's work transforms the *act* of listening into the *art* of listening and this is what she believes is the highest path of healing. She is one of the nation's most sought after bereavement writers, speakers and poets.



THE STORYTELLING HUMAN: HOW STORIES MAKE US HUMAN by **JONATHAN GOTTSCHALL**, Washington, PA. Story infiltrates every aspect of how we live and think. Did you know that fiction enhances our empathy? Did you know that stories have brought on wars, inspired atrocities, and driven massive social change? Gottschall will lead a whirligig tour of a new science of stories—why we shape them, and how they shape us. He is a Distinguished Fellow in the English Department at Washington & Jefferson College.

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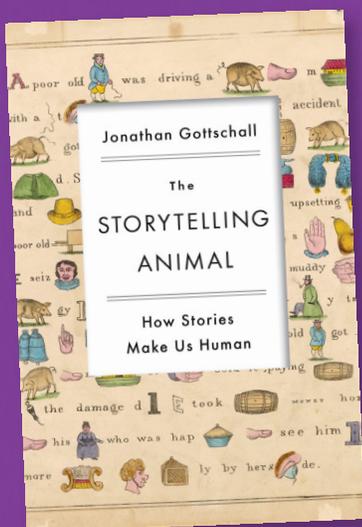
ART WORKS.

Higher Order Thinking (HOT) Schools is a program of the Connecticut Office of the Arts, Department of Economic and Community Development.

HOT Resources

THE STORYTELLING ANIMAL—How Stories Make Us Human

by Jonathan Gottschall



In this delightful and original book, Jonathan Gottschall offers the first unified theory of storytelling. Drawing on the latest research in neuroscience, psychology, and evolutionary biology, Gottschall tells us what it means to be a storytelling animal. Did you know that all children act out the same kinds of stories, whether they grow up in a slum or a suburb? That people who read more fiction are more empathetic?

barnesandnoble.com

Jonathan Gottschall will present at the 23rd Annual HOT Schools Summer Institute, July 11–15, 2016. Online registration opens February 26.

The Arts are Always In Residence in HOT Schools

—Amy Goldbas, Associate Director for Program Design

The HOT Schools Program strives to inspire life-long learning. We believe it is the legacy of arts integrated teaching and learning. We understand that achieving this goal requires teachers, administrators, teaching artists and students to take risks. It requires curiosity, research and experimentation and developing the fortitude to repeat the process again and again. The painter Henri Matisse said, “The artist begins with a vision—a creative operation requiring an effort. Creativity takes courage.” Creative courage is in residence in HOT schools.

Teaching Artists are the critical partners who cultivate creative courage during their collaborations with classroom teachers to help bring curriculum to life and provide students with authentic arts experiences. HOT Schools arts residencies are called Teacher Artist Collaborations (TACs) and are distinguished by a rigorous planning and reflection process. With their unique skill, vision and passion for their particular arts disciplines, Teaching Artists collaborate with teachers to simultaneously teach an arts discipline and the academic curriculum. The arts and arts standards are taught in concert with the academic goals and Common Core standards allowing students a breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding. The vocabularies of the arts and of the curriculum, taught together, create multiple pathways to understanding for all students. Teaching Artists become integral members of each school community. Parents often participate in a variety of ways and gain a greater understanding of how collaboration can enrich and deepen learning. Teaching Artists leave behind indelible creative experiences and tool-kits of creative strategies for teachers to use long beyond the time limits of the Teacher Artist Collaboration (TAC). These arts experiences provide invaluable lessons in persistence, skills building, research and collaboration. Students learn that problems can have more than one solution. They learn that questions can have more than one answer. They learn that there are many ways to see and interpret the world.

HOT Schools TACs are designed to align the program’s three core components, Strong Arts, Arts Integration and Democratic Prac-

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HOT SCHOOLS DIRECTORY

Alcott Elementary School
Wolcott

Columbus Magnet School
Norwalk

Edgewood Magnet School
New Haven

Gaffney Elementary School
New Britain

High School in the Community
New Haven

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Norwich

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R. J. Kinsella Magnet School
Hartford

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Manchester

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Pleasant Valley Elementary School
South Windsor

Samuel Staples Elementary School
Easton

Worthington Hooker School
New Haven

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Kim Thibodeau
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Teach Like a Pirate... continued

On the ride back to Pleasant Valley I found teachers grouped together, talking about specific units and lessons they could invigorate. Teachers were collaborating on how to make curriculum more hands-on and how to pique student interest at the start of a unit. The ideas presented by Burgess are not ones that can or would be used every day. Rather, they are the ideas that bring passion back to what we do—for educators and students.

Professional Development such as Teach Like a Pirate serves several purposes. First, it inspires us to be creative and have fun in the profession. But more than that, it remind us why we went into teaching—to inspire children to want to learn and look for ways to tap into their intelligences. When teachers were surveyed about the session after attending, the overwhelming majority thought it was a fantastic day. Since then, I have walked in on lessons where students are hanging on every word, I've delivered "packages" that were anonymously dropped off at school and contained artifacts for a lesson, and I have seen classrooms transformed into historical settings. I know that Dave Burgess was an inspiration to many on that day, and as a building administrator, that is one measure of success.

The Arts are Always In Residence... continued

tice, with the collaborating teacher's curriculum, the arts and academic content standards. Strong Arts provides a foundation for arts integration. During TACs, the students, teachers and teaching artists work together to develop their understanding of arts vocabulary and the processes of creating in order to weave the arts and curriculum into Arts Integrated learning opportunities. Democratic Practice, which supports voice, choice, participation and responsibility, allows students to become independent, confident thinkers and collaborators. It encourages them to become active citizens and celebrates them as members of their community. Each HOT school becomes a launching pad for creative and critical thinkers to become life-long learners.

The HOT Schools program offers professional development the third Wednesday of every month either at a HOT school or an arts organization. Join us! To register for upcoming professional development opportunities, contact HOTSchools@wesleyan.edu.



Our Buddy Bench

—The Student Senators, John Lyman Elementary



John Lyman Elementary students and teachers debut the Buddy Bench.

We are the Senators from John Lyman School in Middlefield, Connecticut. Our school worked together to create a Buddy Bench. Kids that feel lonely and need someone to play with can sit on the bench. A buddy will come and ask them to play.

This project was started by the school senators during the 2014-2015 school year and was completed this fall. The Senate received notes saying that students were feeling left out at recess. Senators started to brainstorm ideas. We had heard about the Buddy Bench idea and thought this would solve our problem.

Senators went back to their classrooms to ask for help designing the bench. Ideas and drawings were brought back to a Senate meeting and Ms. Palo, a parent and an artist, helped senators compile the ideas into a design.

In the fall of 2015, Ms. Palo put an outline of the design on the bench. We decided to use everyone's fingerprint to create the design. Different color paints were used to create the happy, summer day scene.

Every member of the John Lyman community, students, teachers, support staff and administrators, came and placed their fingerprint on the bench. Each print was a pledge to say that they will be a good buddy. It honors the agreement to never bully and to not leave others out when you are playing a game.

A ceremony was held to reveal the bench. The whole school came to the playscape and gathered around the area where we would place the Buddy Bench. Senators, from last year and this year, carried the bench out to its place of honor. Senators spoke about why the bench was there and how it could help students. The ceremony concluded with the Pledge of Allegiance.

We are really proud of our Buddy Bench. We hope it will help children make new friends. Come down and see it for yourself.

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